

Town Of Bridgewater
Committee to Save the Bridgewater Village School Building
Minutes of October 17, 2017

DRAFT Minutes

Location: Second Floor of the Southgate House in Bridgewater

Date: October 17, 2017

Time: 6:00 PM

Meeting was called to order at approximately 6:00 pm by Brian Bontrager.

Present: Brian Bontrager, Collen Doyle, William Young, Vicky Young, Hank Smith, Brianne Gallagher and Joni Kennedy

Visitors: Nope Martin, Lynne Bertram, Ray Kennedy Jr., Bruce Maxham, Andy Bird, Josh Maxham, Ray Kennedy Sr., Gloria Martin, Nancy Robinson, Jeanette Sawyer, Marge duMond, Robert Buchan

Guest Speaker: Bob Haynes, Executive Director with Green Mountain Economic Development

Additional Guests: Peter Gregory, Executive Director and Kimberly Gilbert, Regional Planner with Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission and Lisa Ryan, Field Services with Preservation Trust of Vermont

At the September 12, 2017 Select Board Meeting Brian Bontrager and Hank Smith asked the board if they would formally approve and sanction our School House Committee/Group so we could look into Grant opportunities for a Feasibility Study and Market Analysis regarding the Bridgewater Village School Building.

This is our committee's first organizational meeting since we were sanctioned and formally approved by the select board. Brian opened the meeting up. First order of business was to elect a Chairperson, Co- Chair and Clerk. Hank Smith made the motion to nominate Brian Bontrager as our Chair Person. Vicky Young seconded it. Bill Young made the motion to nominate Joni Kennedy as Clerk and Vicky Young seconded it. Joni made the motion to nominate Hank Smith as Co-Chair and Vicky Young seconded it. We thanked the Select Board members present (Nope and Lynne) for approving and sanctioning our committee.

Bill and Vicky Young expressed that they felt maybe they should step down given a recent article that was featured in the Vermont Standard on October 12th. The committee urged them not to as they are an important part of the committee/group and have been since its inception this past March.

Brian Bontrager asked if anyone present would like to join the committee. He said we welcome new members and anyone interested in being part of the committee. Brian

asked a second time, once again extending the offer to any interested residents who might like to be a part of our committee. No one expressed an interest.

Bob Haynes, Executive Director from Green Mountain Economic Development, Peter Gregory with Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission and Lisa Ryan, Field Services with Preservation Trust of Vermont spoke to the group and visitors about opportunities in regards to Planning Grants, Village Designation and options available for our Town, Community and Historic Bridgewater Village School Building.

Bob Haynes, Executive Director from Green Mountain Economic Development gave an overview of Green Mountain Economic Development and how they help communities grow with building businesses, economies and communities. He discussed grant options, feasibility studies, and market/plant analysis. Studying needs and uses found with assets the town has. Looking at our options could help in creating a nice downtown (School House, Southgate House and Fire Department). Bob gave a quick overview on Planning Grants. Green Mountain Economic Developments website <http://www.gmedc.com/gm/about-us>

Peter Gregory, Executive Director with Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission discussed Village Designation and/or Downtown Designation (larger communities). He said Village Designation is simple to obtain and Two Rivers can help prepare the application for the Town of Bridgewater. There are Historic Tax credits, Code improvement Tax Credits, Technology Tax Credits etc. Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commissions website <http://www.trorc.org>

1) Village Designation Program supports local revitalization efforts and help build strong communities. More information can be found <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs/village-centers>

Question asked if a Downtown Designation raises people's taxes. The answer was no.

Discussion about the Town of Bridgewater's Municipal Planning Grant, updating Town Plan and possibility of funds that are in that grant that may be able to help with planning.

Lisa Ryan, Field Services with Preservation Trust of Vermont spoke about all of the grant opportunities available. Please see attached handout/Funding Directory. Lisa said buildings over 50 years old are eligible for being a Historic Building. Lisa gave an overview on The Community Development Block Grant Program which is a Planning Grant. With this grant we could do a feasibility study and market analysis. They have a 25% match.

Preservation Trust of Vermont - Saving Buildings & Building Community For More than 30 Years. Website <http://ptvermont.org>

2) Community Development Block Grant Program - Planning Grants

Federal grants for community development planning, downtown planning studies, and project development planning for individual buildings. Range \$3,000 to \$30,000.
<http://accd.vermont.gov>

Lynne Bertram asked Josh Maxham about the condition of the building as The Fire Department recently occupied the building one weekend for Training/Drills with others from around the state. Josh stated there are some code violations in the building, mentioned the sprinkler system etc. A grant would be able to study those concerns.

Robert Buchan stated that reuse would provide a fresh start.

Ray Kennedy Jr. mentioned that there are two groups - one is looking at preserving the School and the other group is looking at building a new Fire Department.

Lisa Ryan said we should look at a building in Poultney that was repurposed as an example. Here is some information regarding that project.

<http://www.vermontbiz.com/news/may/leahy-helps-open-bentley-hall-poultney>

<http://www.greenmtn.edu/green-mountain-college-introduces-the-meeting-house>

Our group was invited to attend the next Firehouse Building Committee Meeting which will be on Tuesday, October 24th at 6:00 pm at the Fire Station. It was shared that one of the options the Fire Department is considering is tearing down 2/3rds of School House Building and leaving the front two rooms of the School House and then adding on a new Fire Department and Community Center.

Nope Martin was concerned about the cost of \$25,000.00 a year to maintain the building. We discussed that the Town has the funds as the money has been budgeted. The question was posed if there was a concern of \$25,000.00 to maintain it for the year then what about the \$100,000.00 it would cost the town and taxpayers to tear it down?

One of our members felt uncomfortable with the tone of some of the evening's conversation and had excused themselves.

It was decided that a Special Select Board Meeting should be scheduled and invite Josh Hanford from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development
<http://accd.vermont.gov> to present the Community Development Blocks Grant Program to the Select Board. Also, arrange for a presentation on Village Designation. Bob Haynes will speak with these agencies and find a date that will work for them and then coordinate it with the Town.

A big thank you goes out to Bob Haynes, Executive Director – with Green Mountain Economic Development, Peter Gregory, Executive Director and Kimberly Gilbert, Regional Planner with Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission and Lisa Ryan, Field Services with Preservation Trust of Vermont for taking their time to meet with us this evening and provide valuable resources, information and help mentor us in this

process of exploring various options in preserving the Historic Bridgewater Village School House and our options at exploring potential reuse and repurposing.

Our guest speakers departed and we bid them farewell. Our next meeting was then set for November 7, 2017 at 5:30 PM.

Adjourned at approximately 7:50 PM

Respectfully submitted by,
Joni Kennedy